

Textualizing Florence: Florentine Studies in the Age of Cosimo I

It was not long ago that the sixteenth century could be referred to as the beginning of Italy's "forgotten centuries," studied by the few and neglected by the many. Happily, that situation has changed. If we turn to the much-examined city of Florence, we find some particularly interesting recent interdisciplinary scholarship that has emphasized the political applications of cultural production under Duke Cosimo I de' Medici (1537-74), and his successors. Cosimo himself has become known for his political leadership as well as his cultural programs. Many of these recent studies portray the city's intellectual life simply as functions of Cosimo's politics. In fact, it merits serious and renewed attention on its own terms, for the writings of these Florentines show clearly that innovative scholarship flourished under Cosimo I.

Some of that scholarship benefited from Cosimo's direct support. The Accademia Fiorentina enjoyed substantial subsidies. Cosimo often hired humanist experts in the planning of public events and festivals, as well as the programs for works intended to have a more permanent existence. And in some cases, Cosimo might commission a specific project, as when he requested Benedetto Varchi to write the history of the city from the time of the fall of its last republic. Cosimo does not show signs of having had a unified program to promote a particular vision, however. Rather, he seems to have pursued a more general goal of promoting letters and scholarship. In part, this meant efforts to build and maintain excellence in all fields, especially those in which Florentines had long excelled, such as the study of classical texts. But his particular interest in studies

that related in some way to Florence and Tuscany coincided with similar interests on the part of many Florentines.

This happy combination of governmental support, the natural inclinations of many Florentines, and the large number of men of letters in the city helped to produce a genuine flowering of what we could now refer to as Florentine studies. The open-ended nature of Cosimo's support (whether by default or by design) led not to a group of compliant courtiers but to creative and diverse, even fractious scholarship. Thanks to the common subject matter, a number of distinct fields and their practitioners were able to converge in ways they might not have otherwise. These Florentines were particularly adept in the use of print resources, bringing out texts related to their city and its culture with a range of audiences and goals. Like any community of scholars, particularly those of their era, they also made use of unpublished writings in a variety of ways; thus the two must be examined together to see this intellectual community at work.

The Accademia Fiorentina began as a private organization of like-minded individuals interested in poetry—their own as well as that of their great Florentine predecessor Petrarch—who began meeting at the home of Giovanni Mazzuoli (known as Stradino) in 1540. They called themselves the Accademia degli Umidi (evoking qualities of fertility for their efforts) and took as their model a recently-formed group in Padua known as the Infiammati. The Infiammati in turn were supporters of Pietro Bembo's writings on language, which centered on the promotion of literary Tuscan as the norm for the Italian vernacular, and their number included the Florentine Benedetto Varchi. Cosimo and his government had in fact banned unauthorized private meetings for security reasons, especially among the prominent from among whose ranks had come the

political rebels of the 1530s. Rather than disbanding the new group, however, Cosimo saw its potential to add both literary and scholarly luster to the city, and chose to recognize and sponsor it officially instead. Within a few months it had changed its name to the Accademia Fiorentina, set up a twice-weekly schedule of private and public meetings and lectures, and declared a wider range of goals. In addition to their particular interest in the great Florentine authors such as Petrarch and Dante, members were devoted to the promotion of the Florentine language in every way. They supported literary efforts in the language, of course; they also promoted its use as a vehicle for transmitting learning and ideas in every subject, both to demonstrate the abilities of the language and to promulgate learning to a wider public than had knowledge of Greek and Latin. Accordingly, they allowed their lecturers to devote themselves to a range of subjects and also to ancient authors, as long as the latter were (or were being) translated.

The Accademia Fiorentina grew rapidly and flourished. Tightened membership requirements soon began to require that prospective members submit examples of their poetry and prose, and that active members continue to submit at least one example a year. The group's elected officers included censors, who evaluated the literary quality of such submissions, as well as the scholarly level of the lectures. Membership in the Accademia Fiorentina became a desirable mark of status, and the occasional purge of those who were unproductive or un-cooperative led to outbursts of colorful poetic invective. Not all prominent Florentine men of letters chose to join. Vincenzo Borghini, for example, argued that given his administrative responsibilities, the additional time he would need to allocate to the meetings and business of the group would leave him no time at all for his own scholarship. Nonetheless, the Accademia Fiorentina ensured that matters literary

kept a social prominence as well as an intellectual presence in the city. And while actual literary creativity was up to the individual writers, the group's membership criteria ensured at least the production of a substantial volume of poetry and prose that met a solid critical standard.

Keeping the schedule of lecturers filled was a more difficult task; only a relatively small number of members felt willing or able to lecture, though they seem to have found it easier to offer criticism of the lectures they heard.¹ A vocal minority, for example, found Francesco Verino's lectures too philosophical for their tastes,² and many later accused Varchi of the same.³ Themes and approaches might vary widely, from a focus on a particular sonnet of Petrarch to broader themes such as the vice of envy as treated by Dante, or the geographical location of the Purgatorio as described in the *Commedia*. Both poems and lectures found their way often into print.

The interests of the members in the vernacular language were not confined to literary production and criticism; they extended to the study of the language itself. Not only was this interest widely shared across the Italian peninsula, but the particular interest in Tuscan or Florentine had a broad base as well. The sixteenth-century debates now referred to as the "questione della lingua" addressed a range of issues about how to define, evaluate, and set normative standards for the vernacular language. Given the well-established variations of dialects in Italy, such standards had implications not only for spelling and orthography but vocabulary, syntax, and grammar. The general prominence of early writers of Florentine (in particular Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio) made Florentine a natural candidate as the basis for a peninsular literary standard. Florentines may have stood to benefit from such a position, but the promotion of Florentine was

certainly not restricted to them. A highly prominent advocate was the Venetian Pietro Bembo (1470-1547), whose *Prose della volgar lingua* (Venice, 1525) developed a case for basing the standard upon the great Florentine writers of the fourteenth century.

The ranks of Florence's Bembists were strengthened considerably with the return of Benedetto Varchi (1503-65) from Padua in 1543. Varchi promoted Bembo's principles in his lectures at the Accademia Fiorentina (a number of which he subsequently published) and by means of his successful efforts to publish Florentine editions of the work.⁴ Lorenzo Torrentino printed three press runs in 1548 and one in 1549, edited by Varchi. In his dedicatory letter to Cosimo, Varchi praised Bembo's great service to the city. Bembo had both favored its language and purged it of the rust accumulated since the days of the great authors. Not only did Tuscans benefit from his efforts, but even Italians and ultramontanes could now write as well as read good Tuscan thanks to him.⁵

By no means did all Florentines, or even all Academy members, identify with the Bembists. Some believed that an understanding of the virtues proper to Florentine could come only from an appreciation of its unique origins. Giovanni Battista Gelli and Pier Francesco Giambullari argued that the origins of Tuscan were to be found not in Latin but in ancient Etruscan, which in turn was a form of Aramaic. It was Gelli who first circulated these theories in writing, in a publication that was already impossible to find by the 1570s;⁶ a modern edition exists thanks to the survival of a manuscript copy.⁷ Gelli's arguments were based on the writings and forgeries of Annius of Viterbo, which claimed that central Italy had been settled by Noah directly after the biblical Flood, and that ancient culture had had its earliest and most formative center in the area around

Viterbo itself. These claims were a matter of some debate in Florence and elsewhere, and this small but influential circle came to be referred to as “Aramei.”

Giambullari followed up Gelli’s work with one of his own, a dialogue with his friend as principal interlocutor: *Il Gello* (Florence, 1546, 1549).⁸ In this work Giambullari acknowledged that Annius’s reliability had come under considerable suspicion, so he sought other foundations for his arguments, most of which were nonetheless very similar to those made by Gelli in the earlier work. Giambullari tried to draw upon his own studies of Hebrew and Chaldean to build a case that many individual Tuscan words seemed to have developed from those languages, and that Tuscans had retained unique linguistic features since antiquity.

Giambullari was able to name Cosimo among his supporters. Indeed, when Cosimo married Eleonora of Toledo in 1539, these theories played a small but significant role in the celebrations. Giambullari was involved in the planning of these festivities, and was also the author of their published description.⁹ After the couple’s triumphal entrance into the city, they and their guests enjoyed a banquet and allegorical Trionfo in the court of the Palazzo Medici. The Trionfo began with Apollo’s invocation of the muses. They introduced the goddess Flora, who was joined by the spirits of the Tuscan rivers. Their song led to the presentations of various Tuscan cities who also offered their blessings upon the wedding. Apollo presented the city of Fiesole as built by Japheth, son of Noah;¹⁰ Volterra, he noted later, had been founded by Janus.¹¹ Cosimo’s interest continued throughout Giambullari’s career, and he even offered some suggestions in the composition of *Il Gello*.

A few scholars differed with the Aramei while nonetheless finding the basic argument compelling. The Dominican Santi Marmochino wrote a dialogue around 1550 (which remained in manuscript) in which he followed the Annian narrative but argued that the point of origin was not Aramaic but Hebrew.¹² A Monsignor Agostini is reputed to have followed Annius's arguments in his *Dialoghi*.¹³ Most colleagues, however, rejected their position, and Giambullari's subsequent studies of the modern language avoided building upon claims about the distant past.

One of Giambullari's friends was responsible for a particularly interesting experiment in the study and promotion of modern spoken Florentine. In 1544 an editor and publisher produced two works under the pseudonym "Neri Dortelata." His ties with the Aramei can be seen in the press's emblem, a Janus-faced Noah in his ark. Both works feature very curious orthography, with prominent accent marks on all multi-syllable words and idiosyncratic spellings. One title was a work by Giambullari, a lecture on the location and shape of Dante's *Inferno*.¹⁴ (Figures 1-2) The other was an edition of Ficino, his commentary on the *Symposium* translated into Florentine by Ficino himself and edited by Dortelata.¹⁵ (Figures 3-4) The choice of Ficino for this particular exercise may seem unexpected. Accademia Fiorentina members were showing interest in publishing a number of his writings in translation, and as the dedication states, Ficino was highly regarded both as a writer of important ideas and as a noted Florentine. Since Ficino himself had made the translation, and it was not otherwise readily available, Dortelata's choice hoped to ensure a relatively wide exposure for his own linguistic efforts.

These publications, given their idiosyncrasies, might well be taken for just another point of engagement in the battles over *volgare* orthography, as indeed some

modern scholars have described them. Neri Dortelata explains otherwise in an essay introductory to the Ficino edition, “Osservazioni per la pronúzia Fiorentina.” Having noted the great interest of many persons in Italy and beyond in speaking (as well as writing) proper Tuscan, he has decided to offer a service. As a Florentine and a careful observer, he has undertaken to represent with precision all of the various sounds of Florentine. While some might think him presumptuous for amending the letters of Latin, the mother of the modern tongue, he points out that he has not actually added any letters; he has, rather, simply modified some as needed. Dortelata also compares the role of Florentine among the Italians to that of Athenian in ancient Greece. Unlike Florentine, however, Greek and Latin each won their roles as dominant languages through military conquest.

The goal of his project was simple: through reading this text with careful attention to the signs and the sounds for which they stand, anyone could learn correct Tuscan speech and pronunciation. The enterprise itself, however, had clearly required careful work on the part of Dortelata, and very creative use of existing print technologies, since he relied upon pre-existing type sets. (Figures 2, 4) He explains how a number of Latin letters represented more than one sound in Florentine, and so he had used different typefaces to represent them. Open and closed ‘e,’ for example, employ the “cancellaresco” and cursive forms of the letter, respectively. Not only vowels but consonants receive such careful definitions, so that voiced and unvoiced ‘s’ and ‘z’ receive distinct forms of the respective letters, double consonants follow clear rules, and every silent ‘h’ is eliminated. The accent marks represent an additional level of pronunciation. Acute syllables (rising inflection, with stress) are marked but not grave

(stable pitch and unstressed); there is no need to mark the latter (or as we would say, the unaccented syllables). Dortelata also identifies a third category of inflection in which the voice goes from high to low, particularly notable in certain exclamations (particularly poetic ones) and some other settings; he assigns the circumflex to those. Since this sign was not normally used in Italian, he feels a particular need to defend it and acknowledges that there might not be full consensus among Florentines on all places where it should appear.

Dortelata claims that he does not intend his notation system to serve as a general orthographic standard; that is, he denies repeatedly that he expects his notation to become an everyday norm. Given the fiendish difficulties of setting type and proofreading represented by the enterprise, this is perhaps not unexpected. Nor is the fact that only two works using the system seem ever to have been published. Rather, Dortelata hopes to offer these publications not only as examples in order to record Florentine pronunciation, but also as educational tools to those who wish to learn it. He urges the citizens of other Tuscan cities to do likewise with their own speech, so that with such guides to pronunciation a reader might make an informed decision either to take the best elements of each as seemed appropriate, or learn one or another with precision.¹⁶

Dortelata also notes that his notation fails to show anything about the proper cadence of speech. Poetry has distinct meters, of course, but so too does prose in its own way; good speech consists of more than choosing the right words and pronouncing each single word correctly. Therefore one needs to talk about number, and a trained ear just as for music. He notes that there is someone now at work on this task of defining and

discussing the metrics of prose, following in the footsteps of Cicero,¹⁷ and so the subject will be taken up at a later time.

Carlo Lenzoni was indeed at work on such a project, but did not live to see it completed. It was published posthumously as the last section of a three-part dialogue in praise of Dante and the Florentine language.¹⁸ Cosimo Bartoli, who edited the volume for Torrentino, explains its difficult history in his dedication to Duke Cosimo. When Lenzoni was taken ill, he entrusted the completion of the work to his friend Giambullari. Giambullari had edited it but also died before the work reached the press, leaving Bartoli to complete the task as well as bereft of a close circle of friends. The final collaboration—each scholar handing his work on to his friend—shows that while these three may not have agreed with one another on the history of the language, they shared a basic agreement on a number of issues, including a particular vision of modern Florentine. The defense of Dante might seem inconsistent with this focus on the modern; but Dante served as a useful means of attack against the Bembists, whom Lenzoni characterizes as out-of-towners who idolized Petrarch and Boccaccio at the expense both of this major author and of the modern spoken language.

The interlocutors include Gelli, Giambullari, Lenzoni, Bartoli, and a foreigner just arrived from Padua. Dante is praised not only on his literary merits, but also for his influence on modern Florentine, the proper standard for which can only be found in Florence. The favoring of native speakers would extend to ancient languages too if only it were possible; if one could point to a place where Latin were still the native tongue, that would be the place to go to learn Latin. Lenzoni also repeats the analogy to Greek common to this group: Florentine is to Italian as Athenian was to Greek, and just as one

once needed to travel to Athens or hire an Athenian to learn proper Greek, so too with Florence and the judgment of Florentines about proper usage.

The second dialogue includes a long passage in which the terminology of musical proportion (for the relations 2:1, 3:2, 4:3 and so on) is translated into Florentine and explained; this unfinished section seems intended to present the tools needed to develop the discussion of prose metrics in the final section.¹⁹ Giambullari breaks in to comment as editor that while the second section was sufficiently complete for him to finish it off in dialogue form, this final section had been so rough that he thought it best simply to present it as is, as points of argument on their own, rather than his attempting to make the style consistent with the rest.

This section discusses long and short syllables and their characters according to the vowels and consonants of which they are formed, and includes a passage on accents (acute, grave, circumflex) very reminiscent of Dortelata. Lenzoni then moves on to treat number and metrical feet. He argues that each language has its own sort of harmony or natural musical sense of accents and time, and they are best judged as music is judged, by a trained ear. Meter and accent in prose must be far less structured than in poetry, of course, or risk sounding stilted and artificial. Nonetheless they remain linked closely to poetics. One might master their use in two ways. One is by means of theory, through the careful study of metrics. The second, practical route would be to practice improvisatory singing in a variety of meters, without taking concern for rhyme. Improvisatory song had an especially venerable tradition in Florence, and was still common among members of the Accademia Fiorentina.²⁰ If one truly is incapable of that, similar results could be

found by taking lines from Petrarch's poetry, altering words that had been chosen artificially to meet the restrictions of rhyme, and using those lines in prose.

Cosimo Bartoli has seemed to a number of most scholars the most plausible identity of "Neri Dortelata." Most library cataloguing agrees, though Judith Bryce expressed doubts in her study of Bartoli.²¹ Comparison with the Lenzoni text seems to point to Lenzoni, or perhaps a collaborative effort by Bartoli and Lenzoni. Giambullari, suggested as author by Piero Fiorelli, seems unlikely due to Dortelata's description of Latin as the mother of Florentine.²² This group of scholars shared a commitment not only to the great vernacular authors (a trait common to most contemporary men of letters) but to the modern spoken language. Further, they tried to devise precise ways of describing and notating all aspects of that spoken language; like the musical scholars to whom they refer, they faced the problem of how to identify and describe physical sounds and the relationships among them, especially important given the ephemeral nature of the phenomenon. Also like those scholars, they came to emphasize the importance of the trained ear for comparison and evaluation. (Technologies of sound recording have rendered such problems somewhat less acute for modern scholars.) They recognized the important role already played by Florentine in establishing standards for Italian vernacular, and promoted their particular position with publications that not only articulated their position, but that would also help meet a perceived practical need.

Members of the Academy were able to make use for some years of a subsidized press. Lorenzo Torrentino (Laurens van den Bleek) and his influential press have received recent attention by Antonio Ricci.²³ Lelio Torelli, the ducal secretary who would be responsible for the important edition of Justinian's *Pandects* (Torrentino, 1553),

confirmed the official invitation to Torrentino, who was then working in Bologna. He moved to Florence in 1547, and began serious book production the next year. Historians have made frequent allusions to political considerations in this choice; Torelli himself claimed in a letter to ducal secretary Lorenzo Pagni that Cosimo had found Torrentino superior in his type fonts, proofreading, foreign experience, and general diligence.²⁴

Torrentino received a twelve-year contract that included cash subsidies (100 scudi per year), import monopolies, and a number of tax breaks. He agreed in turn to restrictions on pricing, to ducal approval of titles, and to keep Florence, Pisa, and the whole state supplied with books on all subjects. He managed to print about 260 editions in Florence during his time there, most of them during his first several years. His sons kept the enterprise going in Florence and a second shop in Savoy (in Mondovì) for a few years after his death in 1563. The ongoing wars in Tuscany during the term of his contract, particularly the war with Siena, took a toll on the business.²⁵ Most contemporaries who had reason to comment felt that the extent of his continuing financial difficulties was caused less by restrictions imposed by his contract's terms than by his own poor business skills.

A relatively high percentage of Torrentino's editions were vernacular (and that almost entirely Florentine), about two thirds.²⁶ Given that members of the Accademia Fiorentina were responsible for about a quarter of the press's publications, this is not surprising. They included vernacular translations of a number of classical authors, consistent both with the Accademia Fiorentina's goals of promoting knowledge in the vernacular, and the press's mandate to supply books to the region. Aristotle, Boethius, Sallust, Virgil, and other authors received new translations that met the academy's

linguistic standards. Torrentino also published works by members of the university faculty at Pisa. The production of university books had been one of the initial reasons for the regime's search for a press, particularly since Pisa had no press of its own. Their presence did not dislodge printers already established in Florence; the Giunti survived, though they were forced to scramble to meet the competition. Despite complaints about Giunti (as well as other presses) among Piero Vettori's correspondents, for example, Vettori continued to use them for a number of his editions of classical texts; he also sent projects off to publishers in Venice, Paris, and Lyon. His publications with Torrentino consisted mainly of his lectures and orations.

Many of Torrentino's editions were simple octavos, ornamented only with an emblem or even less, to help ensure the low prices mandated by the contract. (Figures 5, 6) Luxury editions received more elaborate treatment. (Figure 7) Few betray a strong sense of an overall publishing program. Benedetto Varchi remarks in the dedication to Cosimo of his translation of Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* that Cosimo had requested the translation;²⁷ but in fact several translations of the work appeared nearly simultaneously, including one by Lodovico Domenichi published by Torrentino the year before.²⁸ In a note to the reader preceding an edition of some of Giambullari's lectures, Torrentino expresses his own satisfaction at publishing the works of members of the Accademia Fiorentina.²⁹

The information presented in one of the press's early editions, Tommaso Benci's translation of the *Pimander* (Figure 6), offers a bit more insight about the selection of works. The volume's editor, Carlo Lenzoni, had long wanted to publish the work, and found the opportunity when the new printer Lorenzo Torrentino asked him to provide the

press with some good Tuscan titles. He suggests that the Accademia Fiorentina would welcome the appearance of so beautiful, ancient and holy a work as they were lovers both of the language and of divine mysteries.³⁰ He emphasizes Ficino's virtues of both habits and scholarship, and Benci's importance as part of Ficino's circle and as a skilled translator of Ficino's own Latin translation of the *Pimander*. The specifics of Ficino's thought or of Platonic philosophy receive scant attention at best; the emphasis is on Ficino and Benci as prominent Florentines and promoters of virtue. Works of quality, when in possible in Florentine by Florentines, were high priority; the particulars of content or philosophy were apparently less so.

As central as publishing was to this community of men of letters, the production and circulation of manuscripts remained vitally important as well. Letters are perhaps the most obvious example, and in their use of letters the Florentines differed little from their contemporaries. The immense collection of letters to Piero Vettori at the British Library may be used as an example.³¹ Mundane letters served to transact business, convey information, provide recommendations and introductions, and accompany packages, without necessarily being of broader interest. Vettori's far-flung network of assistants and colleagues worked on various aspects of their text editions through their letters; clusters of correspondents in a given city (say, Rome) might meet with another and confer over Vettori's latest letters to them as well as their own findings while composing individual letters back to him. Some of these working letters might expand into brief treatises, as one Girolamo Mei sent in 1549 on poetics, to which he referred in his next letter as a real *novella*.³² Letters with broader appeal for one reason or another might expect to find a broader readership, of course, among colleagues or visitors of the recipient, and those

with commercial appeal for any number of reasons might make it into print. Torrentino published several such collections of differing types.³³

But longer works might also circulate only in manuscript. Despite Girolamo Mei's great productivity, he published nothing under his own name. His editorial work all came out as part of the Vettori enterprise. He wrote a long treatise on Tuscan verse,³⁴ simply to see whether he could do so, not because he was actually a poet himself, he wrote to Vettori.³⁵ Given the stridency of the battles on poetry and language within and without the Accademia Fiorentina, his reluctance to commit such a work to print may have been a sensible choice. It is also possible that his brief brush with the Inquisition in 1562 left him reluctant to put his name into print.³⁶ Very technical works would be expensive to publish in any case and called for strenuous proofreading and correcting that might not seem worthwhile for a limited readership, though recopying manuscripts also required careful copyists. When Mei finished his Latin treatise on ancient music, he sent a partial manuscript to Vettori saying that he hoped a few friends in particular would read it and any other interested parties might as well, but any copying should be done only with his knowledge; further, his own difficulties in finding good copyists slowed his sending a complete manuscript.³⁷

To leave a work in manuscript limited the extent of its circulation and hence of its impact, but it did help to control readership. It also got a work into circulation very quickly; rapid dissemination to a controlled number of readers might be far more important at times than a published book. Further, a work on a controversial subject could be withdrawn more easily, if desired, from a relatively small circle of manuscript readers. When Mei challenged Vincenzo Borghini's design for the painting of the foundation of

the city in the Palazzo Vecchio in 1565, he did so with a manuscript treatise on the city's origins.³⁸ It found its target audience quickly among Florence's men of letters, and Borghini was forced to reply first in a series of letters exchanged with Mei, then in a lengthy treatise of his own on the origins of Florence as well as one on ancient colonial cities more generally. Borghini finally proved his point, though not without considerable effort. Given his eventual concession, it not surprising that Mei would not have sought to have published his work later, and that the only surviving copy can be found in Borghini's notebooks.

Historical writings seem to have had an especially difficult publishing history. Histories tended to be long-term efforts undertaken by mature scholars and took years to complete; they suffered frequent interruption by shorter-term projects. Cosimo was especially interested in history. Although most history writing in Florence was the private business of individual scholars, Cosimo commissioned Benedetto Varchi in 1547 to write a history of Florence from the fall of its last republic (1527) to the rule of Alessandro.³⁹ Varchi had been among the republicans who had favored the 1527 expulsion of the Medici and gone into exile upon their return; he had even taken up arms, though very briefly, when the exiles tried to remove the young Cosimo. He was hardly a natural defender of the Medicean cause, and in fact his history spared no side, portioning out praise and blame as seemed appropriate to the situation.

Varchi was noted not only for his even-handed treatment, but also for his wide use of sources. He had recourse to Paolo Giovio's recent histories, published several times in Florence as well as elsewhere, though he used them sparingly, as his research convinced him that Giovio's reliability needed improvement. He availed himself of other,

recently-published modern histories published across Europe (including Johann Sleidan's Protestant history of the Reformation, translated and published by Torrentino in 1557), as well as texts circulating in manuscript. Notes survive from his interviews with witnesses and participants. He used private letters and a number of personal diaries. Though many Florentine state papers had been lost during and after the 1527 siege, he was given access to those that remained. Indeed, he found himself dunned and insulted as a pedant by the ducal archivist and his staff for having signed out several volumes of papers and kept them at home for a good three years.⁴⁰ (The archivists preferred Filippo Nerli, whose *Commentaries* were criticized by others for their adulation of Cosimo.⁴¹) One source Varchi did not have access to until late was Guicciardini's *History of Italy*. The work remained unpublished, and access was controlled by Guicciardini's nephew. He wanted to maximize the impact of its publication, and so he refused to allow most scholars to see it. Torrentino issued the first sixteen books in 1561, and a complete edition appeared in Venice with Gabriel Giolito in 1564.⁴²

Varchi's progress was a matter of public knowledge. It was marked by frequent, lengthy trips to Pisa, given Cosimo's frequent presence there, to meet with him and read and discuss his most recent chapters. Varchi's sixteenth-century biographer, Silvano Razzi, offers a colorful (if perhaps apocryphal) description of Cosimo's rapt attention as Varchi read, and his frequent comment: "Miracoli, Varchi, miracoli!"⁴³ These visits too were well known to contemporaries; at times they led to panicky and last-minute requests for assistance to complete unfinished sections by the deadline. On one such occasion Baccio Valori wrote Vettori at his country home in S. Casciano, saying that Varchi was

due to read the section in which he discusses the origins of the city (in Book 10), and could Vettori please contribute some information.⁴⁴

The work itself thus held considerable interest. Numerous partial manuscript copies show the appeal the work had for a variety of readers. Yet Varchi died before completing it, and it was only published in the eighteenth century.⁴⁵ While this particular publication delay may have been extreme, the pattern itself was all too common, as the slow publication of Guicciardini attests. Florence was full of histories in process, as well as histories published only posthumously. In addition to his work in completing Lenzoni's dialogues, Cosimo Bartoli had to edit Giambullari's *History of Europe* for its posthumous printing.⁴⁶ The time-consuming administrative duties that kept Vincenzo Borghini from the Accademia Fiorentina also kept him from completing the writing up of any of his own research on Florentine and Tuscan history and culture; a team of colleagues edited the bulk of them and brought them out as four volumes of *Discorsi* four years after his death in 1580.⁴⁷ It seems a great irony that so many of these projects, viewed by authors and colleagues alike as some of their most important works, faced some of the greatest delays in making it into print.

These examples serve only to introduce, not to exhaust, Florentine scholarship on Florentine topics. All represent efforts to bring into textual form some aspect of Florentine studies. All show cases of Medici support. Yet they do not represent a consistent point of view or even scholarly approach, and none can be seen to have been adopted as some sort of official court position. Varchi disagreed strenuously with Giambullari on most aspects of the history of the Florentine language, just as he disagreed with him about the modern language; he would go one to assert his own

position in his treatise, *L'Ercolano* (Florence and Venice, 1570).⁴⁸ Borghini also developed his own ideas about the study of language; while he disagreed just as strongly with the Aramei, he differed with Varchi as well. Despite Cosimo's interest in Giambullari's arguments, there are no signs that he attempted to influence debate in the Accademia Fiorentina or elsewhere, and in the festivities celebrating the wedding of his son Francesco Janus appears only in his usual classical form.

The recent scholarship on Cosimo's cultural program has noted the importance placed on presenting an image to outsiders of Florence's role as a cultural center. Brief reflection on the spirited and tendentious world of sixteenth-century European intellectual life should serve as a reminder that he could not have done so with coterie of docile courtiers producing mediocre works; only the genuine article could be convincing. This community of scholars thus did in fact serve Cosimo's image, though he seems to have controlled very little of the results of that scholarship. That work allowed these Florentines to see themselves—accurately, I believe—as not only continuing but expanding upon the humanistic traditions developed by their predecessors of the previous centuries, whom they honored both in their debates and in their texts.

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Notes

¹ Michel Plaisance, "Culture et politique a Florence de 1542 a 1551: Lasca et les 'Humidi' aux prises avec l'Académie Florentine," *Les écrivains et le pouvoir en Italie à l'époque de la Renaissance*, ed. André Rochon, 149-242. 2 vols. (Paris: Université de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, 1974), 154-63.

² Michel Plaisance, "Une première affirmation de la politique culturelle de Côme Ier: la transformation de l'Académie des 'Humidi' en Académie Florentine (1540-1542)," *Les écrivains et le pouvoir en Italie à l'époque de la Renaissance*, ed. André Rochon (Paris: Université de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, 1973), 416.

³ Plaisance, "Culture et politique," 168.

⁴ Pietro Bembo, *Le prose del Bembo* (Florence: L. Torrentino, 1548, 1549).

⁵ Bembo, *Prose* (Florence, 1548), sig. Aiii r.

⁶ Judith Bryce, *Cosimo Bartoli (1503-1572): The Career of a Florentine Polymath* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1983), 218.

⁷ Alessandro d'Alessandro, "Giambattista Gelli, *Dell'origine di Firenze*, introduzione, testo inedito e note," *Atti dell'Accademia Toscana di scienze e lettere* 44 (1979): 60-122.

⁸ Pierfrancesco Giambullari, *Il Gello di M. Pier Francesco Giambullari, accademico Fiorentino* (Florence: Per il Doni, 1546; revised and corrected as: *Origine della lingua fiorentina altrimenti Il Gello* (Florence: L. Torrentino, 1549).

⁹ Pierfrancesco Giambullari, *Apparato e feste nelle noze dello illustrissimo Signor Duca di Firenze, e della Duchessa sua Consorta con le sue stanze, madriali, comedia & intermedij in quelle recitati* (Firenze: B. Giunta, 1539; rpt. Venice: Antonelli, 1854).

¹⁰ Andrew C. Minor and Bonner Mitchell, *A Renaissance Entertainment: Festivities for the Marriage of Cosimo I, Duke of Florence, in 1539. An Edition of the Music, Poetry, Comedy, and Descriptive Account, with Commentary* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1968), 169.

¹¹ Minor and Mitchell, 186.

¹² Antonio Francesco Gori, *Storia antiquaria etrusca: del principio e de' progressi fatti finora nello studio sopra l'antichità etrusche scritte e figurate ... : colla*

difesa dell'alfabeto degli antichi Toscani pubblicato nel MDCCXXXVIII dall'autore del Museo etrusco (Florence, 1749), xxxvi-xxxix.

¹³ Gori, *Storia antiquaria etrusca*, xxxiv.

¹⁴ Pierfrancesco Giambullari *accademico Fior. de' l sSito, fôrma, & misûre, dello Infêrno di Dânte*, In Firénze per Néri Dorteláta MDXLIII.

¹⁵ *Marsilio Ficino sopra lo amore o ver' convito di Platone*, In Firénze per Néri Dorteláta con privilégio di N. S. di Novémbre MDXXXIII.

¹⁶ *Marsilio Ficino*, Dortelata, sig. Aiii r-v.

¹⁷ *Marsilio Ficino*, Dortelata, no sig., [Bx] r-v.

¹⁸ Carlo Lenzoni, *In difesa della lingua fiorentina et di Dante. Con le regole da far bella et numerosa la prosa* (Florence: Torrentino, 1556).

¹⁹ Ann E. Moyer, *Musica Scientia: Musical Scholarship in the Italian Renaissance* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1992).

²⁰ Robert Nosow, "The Debate on Song in the Accademia Fiorentina," *Early Music History* 21 (2002): 175-221; *Raffaele Brandolini on Music and Poetry (De musica et poetica, 1513)*, Trans. with intro., notes by Ann E. Moyer, with the assistance of Marc Laureys (Tempe, AZ: MRTS, 2001).

²¹ Judith Bryce, *Cosimo Bartoli (1503-1572): The Career of a Florentine Polymath* (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1983), 215-19.

²² Piero Fiorelli, "Pierfrancesco Giambullari e la riforma dell'alfabeto," *Studi Di Filologia Italiana* 14 (1956): 177-210.

²³ Antonio Ricci, "Lorenzo Torrentino and the Cultural Programme of Cosimo I de' Medici," *The Cultural Politics of Duke Cosimo I de' Medic*, ed. Konrad Eisenbichler (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 103-20.

²⁴ William A. Pettas, *The Giunti of Florence: Merchant Publishers of the Sixteenth Century* (San Francisco: B. M. Rosenthal, 1980), 81.

²⁵ In particular, Torrentino invested in a press in Pescia which was lost when the French took the city Pettas, *Giunti of Florence*, 82.

²⁶ Ricci, 112.

²⁷ *Boezio Seuerino della consolazione della filosofia, tradotto di lingua latina in volgare fiorentino da Benedetto Varchi* (Florence: Torrentino, 1551),

²⁸ *Severino Boetio De conforti philosophici, tradotto per M. Lodovico Domenichi* (Florence: Torrentino, 1550).

²⁹ *Lezioni di M. Pierfrancesco Giambullari, lette nel la accademia fiorentina* (Florence: Torrentino, 1551), 3.

³⁰ *Il Pimandro di Mercurio Trimegesto, tradotto da Tommaso Benci in lingua Fiorentina...* [ed. Carlo Lenzone] (Firenze: Torrentino, 1548), 2-4.

³¹ British Library, Add. 10263-10281. Few of Vettori's replies have survived.

³² BL, Add. 10268, fols. 185-91, 9 June 1559.

³³ *Gasparis Sardi Ferrariensis Epistolarum liber, varia reconditâque historiarum cognitione refertus; eiusdem De triplici philosophia commentariolus: accessit & rerum memorabilium index* (Florence: Torrentino, 1549); *De conflagratione Agri Puteolani, Simonis Portii Neapolitani epistola* (Florence: Torrentino, 1551); *Lettere di diuersi illustrissimi signori, & republiche scritte all'illustrissimo signore il signor Vitello Vitelli* (Florence: Torrentino, 1551); *Quattro lettere di Monsig. Gasparo Contarino Cardinale ...* (Florence: Torrentino, 1558)

³⁴ Girolamo Mei, "Del verso toscano ..." 2 copies: Paris, NB, Ms. lat. 7209; Florence, Bib. Riccardiana, Ms. Ricc. 2598, 1-145.

³⁵ Mei, letter to Vettori, 31 August 1560, BL Add. 10268, 214-15.

³⁶ BL Add. 10276, fol. 87, letter of Girolamo Baccelli to Piero Vettori, 4 September 1562.

³⁷ Mei, Letters to Vettori 23 June 1573, 3 July 1573, BL Add. 10268, fols. 131-315. In: Girolamo Mei, *Letters on ancient and modern music to Vincenzo Galilei and Giovanni Bardi; a study with annotated texts*, ed. Claude B. Palisca (Rome: American Institute of Musicology, 1960), 31.

³⁸ Ann E. Moyer, "Texts, Artifacts, Inscriptions: Historians and Antiquarians at Work in Sixteenth-Century Florence," *Journal of the History of Ideas* (forthcoming).

³⁹ Richard Samuels, "Benedetto Varchi and Sixteenth-Century Florentine Humanism" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1976), 349-86.

⁴⁰ Samuels, "Benedetto Varchi," 355-56.

⁴¹ Samuels, "Benedetto Varchi," 356-58.

⁴² Samuels, "Benedetto Varchi," 361.

⁴³ Silvano Razzi, "Vita di Messer Benedetto Varchi," in Benedetto Varchi, *Storia fiorentina*, ed. Gaetano Milanesi, 3 vols. (Florence: Le Monnier, 1857), 1.12-15.

⁴⁴ Baccio Valori, letter to Piero Vettori, 9 October 1563, BL Add. 10278, fol. 131.

⁴⁵ Benedetto Varchi, *Storia fiorentina di Messer Benedetto Varchi. Nella quale principalmente si contengono l'ultime rivoluzioni della Repubblica fiorentina, e lo stabilimento del principato nella casa de' Medici. Colla tavola in fine delle cose più notabili...* (Colonia: P. Martello, 1721).

⁴⁶ Pierfrancesco Giambullari, and Cosimo Bartoli. *Historia dell'Evropa di m. Pierfrancesco Giambullari nella quale ordinatamente si trattano le cose successe in questa parte del mondo dall'anno DCCC. sino al 913. di nostra salute...*(Venice: F. Senese, 1566).

⁴⁷ Vincenzo Borghini, *Discorsi* (Florence: Filippo, e Iacopo Giunti, e fratelli, 1584-1585).

⁴⁸ Benedetto Varchi, *L'Hercolano, dialogo nel qual si ragiona generalmente delle lingue, et in particolare della toscana, e della fiorentina ...* (Florence: Giunti, 1570; another edition Venice: Giunti, 1570).